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ZNY CCCCC ZZH ZDK PER NUMEROUS SVC REQUESTS  
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FM AMCONSUL SHENYANG  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8332  
INFO RUEHOO/CHINA POSTS COLLECTIVE  
RUEHBK/AMEMBASSY BANGKOK 0513  
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 1781  
RUEHUM/AMEMBASSY ULAANBAATAR 0967  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC 0084  
RHMFISS/COMUSKOREA J2 SEOUL KOR  
RUEKJCS/DIA WASHDC 0065  
RHHJJAA/JICPAC PEARL HARBOR HI 0029  
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC  
RUCGEVC/JOINT STAFF WASHDC 0040  
RHMFISS/SACINCUNC SEOUL KOR  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC 0087  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 0533

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 SHENYANG 000012

SIPDIS

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DEPARTMENT FOR EAP/CM, EAP/K, PRM, INR

E.O. 12958: DECL: TEN YEARS AFTER KOREAN UNIFICATION  
TAGS: [PREF](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [GTIP](#) [KN](#) [KS](#) [CH](#)  
SUBJECT: NORTH KOREAN BORDER-CROSSERS: MORE PRC THINKING;  
YANBIAN/SHENYANG SITREP

REF: A. (A) SHENYANG 7  
[1](#)B. (B) 07 SHENYANG 196  
[1](#)C. (C) 07 SHENYANG 229

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Classified By: CONSUL GENERAL STEPHEN B. WICKMAN.  
REASONS: 1.4(B) AND (D).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: The small group of specialists researching North Korean border-crossers for the PRC government largely endorses Chinese policy on the issue, even if small differences exist. One researcher said a PRC "transit corridor" permitting North Koreans to quietly traverse Chinese territory for a third country would undermine PRC-DPRK and PRC-ROK relations. Contacts in frigid borderland Jilin anecdotally report fewer new arrivals in early 2008 compared to the same period in 2007, while in Shenyang, a former Korean prisoner of war and nine others living in the ROK Consulate await PRC permission to depart for Seoul.  
END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (C) Poloff traveled January 7-11 to Changchun, capital of Jilin Province, as well as to several points in the Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture, including Yanji, Tumen and Nanping. This is the second in a two-part update on the PRC-DPRK border in late 2007 and early 2008; the first report (ref A) focused on politico-economic issues.

PRC RESEARCHER ON NK BORDER-CROSSERS, "TRANSIT CORRIDOR"

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[1](#)3. (C) The handful of specialists sanctioned to research North Korean border-crossers on behalf of the PRC government largely endorses Chinese policy on the issue, according to one of the cohort's foremost researchers. Asked about the state of the internal debate on policy recommendations and potential alternatives, the Jilin Academy of Social Sciences' ZHOU Weiping (STRICTLY PROTECT; see refs B and C for background and recent discussions) during an unofficial meeting in Changchun on January 10 explained to Poloff that she and her colleagues generally agree with the political necessity of continuing China's policy of repatriation except in some humanitarian cases,

even if many acknowledge the policy's human costs. Some researchers may quibble on the margins of the apparently less-than-dynamic policy debate, but differences are generally contained within a narrow spectrum, she noted without elaborating on fault lines.

¶4. (C) Queried about the possibility of Beijing quietly opening a "transit corridor" that would permit North Korean border-crossers to traverse PRC territory for a third country (e.g., from the PRC-DPRK border to the PRC-Mongolian border), Zhou replied that such a measure would be of limited utility because it would simultaneously undermine relations with both the DPRK and the ROK. The PRC would lose valuable political leverage with the DPRK--something Beijing does not want--and the probable surge in third-country asylum-seeking would overwhelm Seoul's capacity to process and absorb new North Koreans, thereby straining PRC-ROK relations. She noted that during the high tide of publicized intrusions by North Koreans into Beijing's diplomatic compounds (i.e., 2002-2003), some PRC government scholars discussed the merits of a de facto loosening that would squeeze the ROK with a flood of new arrivals. Zhou did not say how much traction the idea ever gained in policy circles.

¶5. (C) Government specialists on North Korean border-crosser issues and decisionmakers alike remain in favor of repatriation. Zhou argued that mitigating some of the humanitarian downside is the fact that some officials/police along the border do not actively seek to arrest/repatriate--indeed, they benignly neglect--North Koreans illegally in the PRC. So too does the assistance offered to border-crossers by many borderland Chinese, often because of historical kinship ties. She added that over one-half of Yanbian's ethnic Koreans have family connections in either North or South Korea.

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¶6. (C) Questioned about the views of provincial policymakers, Zhou replied that in her experience, provincial leaders do not generally question current policy toward North Korean border-crossers, in part because they have no decision-making authority on the issue, even at the local level. Authority remains the province of Beijing and the People's Liberation Army/People's Armed Police. Zhou claimed central leaders remain interested in the issue and, like provincial leaders, receive reports from the Liaoning and Jilin social-science academies, along with those from other national institutions.

¶7. (C) (NOTE: Zhou's comments generally track with remarks we heard from other northeastern Chinese government specialists engaged in research border-crossing, including LU Chao (STRICTLY PROTECT) and WU Jianhua (STRICTLY PROTECT), both North Korea experts at the Liaoning Academy of Social Sciences. END NOTE.)

#### BORDER-CROSSERS IN YANBIAN AND SHENYANG

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¶8. (C) YANBIAN. A frigid winter has fallen upon the PRC-DPRK border region, though many sections of the Tumen River have yet to completely freeze over, especially in wider stretches of the river. Anecdotally contacts reported relatively few new North Korean arrivals. Father Jin (STRICTLY PROTECT) of the Ping'an Church in Yanji, which for years has offered succor to border-crossers, told Poloff on January 9 that for the first time in many winters, December 2007 and early January 2008 saw not a single North Korean come to his church for help. He knew of no arrivals among his neighbors or worshipers. Yanbian University DPRK expert GAO Jingzhu (STRICTLY PROTECT) on January 8 claimed only small numbers of arrivals, but forecasted an uptick once the Tumen River freezes completely in the weeks to come. Farther north in Tumen, Vice Mayor Yan Zhihong (STRICTLY PROTECT) acknowledged

small numbers of arrivals within his city limits this winter, and told Poloff on January 8 of a recent visit to the city's holding facility dedicated to North Korean border-crossers, situated in front of a detention center for domestic criminals on the outskirts of town. Yan noted that security officials at the facility segregate the North Koreans into groups/cells based on time spent in China--under one year, 3 years, 5 years, and so on. He suggested that segregation is practiced to prevent North Koreans detainees from swapping information that might in the future help them elude PRC authorities while in China.

19. (C) SHENYANG. Farther south in Liaoning Province, ten North Koreans live in the ROK's Shenyang consulate. Residents include at least one former prisoner of war (POW) and several of his family members, according to Consul KIM Jong Han (STRICTLY PROTECT), who recently attended a North Korean asylum-seeker-workshop in Bangkok convened by the ROKG for its Asia-based diplomats handling the North Korean refugee account at their respective posts. Kim told Poloff on January 7 that PRC processing of his Consulate's North Korean residents was taking longer than expected--usually near, or in excess of, one year. Relatively "expedited" processing for special cases like POWs, however, remains three-to-four months, he noted. A short walk away, seven North Koreans remain in the Japanese Consulate. Japanese officials in December had once been hopeful several of their more pressing cases would receive PRC exit permission on humanitarian grounds before the end of 2007.

WICKMAN